

Stay Informed: Facts about Tuberculosis (TB)

**UCLA
Arthur Ashe
Student Health
& Wellness
Center**

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by germs that are spread from person to person through the air. TB usually affects the lungs, but it can also affect other parts of the body, such as the brain, the kidneys, or the spine. A person with TB can die if they do not get treatment.

What Are the Symptoms of TB?

The general symptoms of TB disease include feelings of sickness or weakness, weight loss, fever, and night sweats. The symptoms of TB disease of the lungs also include coughing, chest pain, and the coughing up of blood. Symptoms of TB disease in other parts of the body depend on the area affected.

How is TB Spread?

TB germs are put into the air when a person with TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. These germs can stay in the air for several hours, depending on the environment. Persons who breathe in the air containing these TB germs can become infected; this is called latent TB infection.

What is the Difference Between Latent TB Infection and TB Disease?

People with latent TB infection have TB germs in their bodies, but they are not sick because the germs are not active. These people do not have symptoms of TB disease, and they cannot spread the germs to others. However, they may develop TB disease in the future. They are often prescribed treatment to prevent them from developing TB disease. People with TB disease are sick from TB germs that are active, meaning that they are multiplying and destroying tissue in their body. They usually have symptoms of TB disease. People with TB disease of the lungs or throat are capable of spreading germs to others. They are prescribed drugs that can treat TB disease.

What Should I Do if I Have Been Exposed to or think I have been exposed to Someone with TB Disease?

People with TB disease are most likely to spread the germs to people they spend time with every day, such as family members or coworkers. If you have been around someone who has TB disease, you should come to the Ashe Center or your local health department for tests. The Ashe Center offers free TB testing to all registered UCLA students; please contact the Ashe Center appointment line or visit our website to make an appointment.

What does it mean if the test is positive?

A positive skin test or QFT usually means that you have been infected with the TB germ. It does not necessarily mean that you have TB disease. Other tests, such as an x-ray or sputum sample, are needed to see if you have TB disease.

What does it mean if the test is negative?

A negative skin test usually means you are not infected. However, the test may be falsely negative if you were infected recently. It usually takes 2 to 10 weeks after exposure to a person with TB disease for your skin test to react as positive. The test may also be falsely negative if your immune system is not working properly.

How is TB Disease Treated?

TB disease can be treated by taking several drugs for 6 to 12 months. It is very important that people who have TB disease finish the medicine, and take the drugs exactly as prescribed.

Make an Appointment

Online: www.studenthealth.ucla.edu

Phone: (310) 825-4073

Walk-In Triage

During summer business hours:

Mon-Thurs 8:00am to 5:00pm

Fri 9:00am to 5:00pm

During Regular business hours:

Mon-Thurs 8:00am to 6:30pm

Fri 9:00am to 6:30pm

Nurseline

Available when we are closed at:

(866) 704-9660

Additional Resources

Centers for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/tb/default.htm>

TB Facts—Treating TB

www.cdc.gov/tb/pubs/tbfactsheets/cure_eng.pdf

TB Facts— Preventing TB

www.cdc.gov/tb/pubs/tbfactsheets/prevention_eng.pdf

TB Facts—TB Exposure

www.cdc.gov/tb/pubs/tbfactsheets/exposure_eng.pdf

Respiratory hygiene

Cover your mouth when you cough!